

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ACCRA 02340 301146Z

ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AGR-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07

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EO 11652 NA

TAGS: PINT, PINS, EAGR, ECON, GH

SUB: ANNOUNCEMENT OF NATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION CORPS

1. IN NATION- WIDE RADIO AND TV BROADCAST EVENING ON MAR 25, ACHEAMPONG LAUNCHED, AT LEAST VERBALLY, A NEW ORGANIZATION-- NATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION CORPS--WHICH IS TO STIMULATE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION AND SOP UP 20,000 YOUNG UNEMPLOYED NOW DRIFTING AROUND GHANA'S CITIES. DETAILS ON HOW THIS IS TO BE ACCOMPLISHED WERE NOT VOUCHSAFED TO LISTENERS.

2. ACHEAMPONG SAID IDLE YOUTH WOULD BE "ENCOURAGED AND ATTRACTED" TO RETURN TO COUNTRYSIDE, WHERE THEY WOULD LIVE IN SELF-SUPPORTING SETTLEMENT GROUPS AND ENGAGE IN FARMING. HE SAID MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE IS HANDING OVER 17 FARMS TO CORPS FOR A START. CORPS WILL ALSO FISH VOLTA LAKE AND HELP PROVIDE VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN LIVESTOCK RAISING, MASONRY, CARPENTRY AND "GENERAL ORIENTATION TO THE DIGNITY OF WORKING WITH THE HAND", ACCORDING TO GHANAIAI TIMES.

3. TIMES TOUCHED EDITORIALY ON REASONS BEHIND FORMATION OF CORPS--SAGGING AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION, AGEING FARMERS, DRIFT OF YOUTH TO CITIES, LACK OF NEW INVESTMENT IN FARMING AND DISAPPOINTING RETURNS FROM "OPERATION FEED YOURSELF."

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PAPER, ALWAYS A STAUNCH BACKER OF GOVERNMENT'S LATEST EFFORT, PAINTED CORPS AS "A RENEWED AND FRESH ATTEMPT TO MARSHAL THE COUNTRY'S HUMAN RESOURCES FOR PRODUCTIVE PURSUITS," BUT SEEMED UNABLE TO MUSTER ANY REAL ENTHUSIASM FOR PROJECT.

4. COMMENT: NOTHING WAS HEARD OF CORPS BEFORE ITS ANNOUNCE-

MENT BY ACHEAMPONG AND IT APPEARS THIS IS ANOTHER OF MANY
GOG SCHEMES LAUNCHED WITH FANFARE BUT WITHOUT PRIOR PLANNING
AND WHICH THEN WITHER FOR LACK OF FOLLOW-UP.WE BELIEVE
THIS GOVERNMENT LACKS THE POLITICAL WILL NECESSARY TO SEND
PEOPLE BACK TO THE LAND AND KEEP THEM THERE. FORCING
YOUTHS TO RETURN TO THE FARM WOULD NOT BE IN KEEPING WITH
GHANAIAAN NATIONAL CHARACTER. GOG LACKS EXPERTISE NECESSARY
TO DEVELOP INCENTIVES WHICH WOULD ENCOURAGE LARGE-SCALE
VOLUNTARY MOVEMENT. WE HAVE NO DOUBT THAT SOME YOUTHS WILL
VOLUNTEER FOR CORPS IF ITS DEBUT IS HIGHLY PUBLICIZED,
BUT WE FEEL SURE THAT FEW WILL ACTUALLY MAKE IT TO COUNTRY-
SIDE. THOSE THAT DO WILL PROBABLY QUICKLY DRIFT BACK TO
CITIES. NET EFFECT ON RURAL AREAS IS LIKELY TO BE MORE
DISRUPTIVE THAN PRODUCTIVE. ENTIRE EXERCISE, HOWEVER, SHOWS
THAT ACHEAMPONG IS AT LAST GIVING SOME INDICATION HE IS
AWARE GHANA IS IN SERIOUS STRAITS AND THAT GOG MUST TAKE
SOME ACTION-EVEN IF IT ONLY HAS PR EFFECT.
SMITH

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